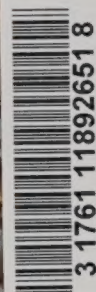


Who gives a damn?

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Department of the Environment,
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ONTARIO



It's early morning, garbage collection day, 25 years ago.

You're standing on an average Ontario street. In front of every home is a single garbage can, waiting. A few homes have two cans.

But look up that same street today. Three, four, as many as six big containers: cans, plastic bags, cardboard boxes; all stuffed with refuse.

Add one fact to this sight: the population of our province has almost doubled in the past 25 years.

Twice as many people are pouring out about four times as much garbage. And it's not going to get less, it's going to get more.

Out of that massive pile-up comes a single question:
What to do with it?

Refuse has a number of qualities, one of them being that it won't disappear, even after it leaves your front door.

And that's only a part of the problem of waste management.

What to do with the tons of stuff our towns and cities collect off our streets?

What about wastes from commercial stores: department, variety and the like? Did you ever look behind a supermarket?

What of industrial dregs—acids, alkalies and waste oils? Agricultural wastes, sewage sludge, radioactive wastes?

What about the thousands of autos abandoned every year?

The trouble is we're a throw-away society. We deliberately make things so they won't last, then turn right around and buy new things that won't last either. We're marvelous at producing, but until recently, thoughtless about disposing.

The trouble is that technology has pushed us to the point where some of our wastes (like radioactive isotopes) are not only dangerous, they're almost impossible to get rid of.

The trouble is if we've thought at all, we've thought it would all go away. It won't. And if you don't believe it, go take a drive on the outskirts of any community. Wonderful.

Nobody's pointing a finger at any particular group. We're all in it up to our chins. We must find ways to stop from being smothered.

That's the job of the Waste Management Branch.

It's a part of the provincial government and, like all pollution control agencies, it operates under one department, the Department of

the Environment. The branch has the power to function because of the Environmental Protection Act, 1971, the strongest piece of legislation of its kind in North America.

The Act covers the control of all solid and liquid wastes which must be hauled away for disposal. It covers the regulation of collection and transport, both public and private. It covers all dumps, landfill areas and incinerators. It covers all new or improved methods of treating waste.

The Waste Management Branch controls all standards of disposal. It inspects and enforces regulations over the hauling of all refuse, its treatment and final disposal.

The idea is to set and maintain certain standards. If the standards are met, the operator of the disposal system gets a Certificate of Approval. The operator can be a community or a private company, it doesn't matter. But no one runs a disposal system without that certificate.

If the operator refuses to improve conditions or constantly violates the Act, the Branch has the power to take the offender to court.

It all sounds so simple, but it's not easy.

To give you an idea, consider this: Well over half the waste produced in Ontario in our Centennial year was disposed of by a method used in the Middle Ages. That's right, take it away to a nearby field and dump it. Leave it there in the open.

Leave it there to rot, breed rats and disease, catch on fire. The flies love it.

Obviously that has to change. But change costs money. It costs a lot of money to switch to, for example, the landfill system. This is where you pack down a layer of waste, then cover it with six inches of clean soil and pack that down. You do this every day, carefully sculpturing the contours as you go. It's a good deal more complicated and expensive than it sounds.

That's one example of what the Waste Management Branch is up against. There's more, some of it complex, all of it vital to our quality of life. If you'd like detailed information, we've got it. What's more, we'd be delighted to part with it. Because if you really know what we're all up against, you can help. How?

Well, suppose a budget increase comes up in your community, an increase necessary to improve your local waste disposal system. If you understand what's needed and why, you'll help.

Please don't expect any miracles.

We can't undo the mess by clapping our hands. But you can expect this, and get it:

We certainly give a damn, and a great deal more.

Write or call:

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